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Part of a language arts program developed under an ESEA Title 3 grant, this curriculum guide for film study in the 10th grade is intended to help students (1) view films more critically, (2) understand the procedures of film making, and (3) appreciate the film as a work of art. Nine films are recommended for viewing, and sample lessons, including objectives and procedures, are given for "Lord of the Flies" and "David and Lisa." Teaching procedures suggested for these films range from having the students read and write reviews of the films to their working with "visual motifs," or single photographs which create an emotion or project a feeling within the audience. (JS)

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B O S T O N - N O R T H A M P T O N

L A N G U A G E A R T S P R O G R A M

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FILM STUDY COURSE

TENTH GRADE

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TE 001 351

FILM STUDY

English 10

Class Material Used

Films

1. "Lord of the Flies"
2. "David and Lisa"
3. "The Hustler"
4. "Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner"
5. "A Patch of Blue"
6. "A Place in the Sun"
7. "From Here to Eternity"
8. "La Strada"
9. "Fahrenheit 451"

Reference Books

1. Knight, Arthur. The Liveliest Art. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957.
2. Kuhns, William and Robert Stanley. Exploring the Film. Dayton, Ohio: Geo. A. Pflaum, Publisher, Inc., 1968

INTRODUCTION

One of the specialized courses introduced into the tenth grade curriculum for the first twelve weeks of the 1968-69 school year was a course in film study. This course was selected to be included in the English curriculum because of its ability to capture student interest and because it was considered to be highly relevant to the student's world today.

It has so often been stated that people are greatly influenced by movies and television, especially young people. And "going to the movies" is perhaps even more popular with young people today than it ever was, considering the availability of transportation and money. Even without these means, television provides enough movies right at home.

If movies are thought to have such great influence upon people, it becomes imperative that educators must prepare people to understand what the film is all about and to equip them with an ability to judge films critically. With these thoughts in mind, the film study course was introduced into the tenth grade curriculum at Woodridge High School.

Objectives

1. To help students become more critical viewers of films.
2. To help students understand the procedures of film making.
3. To help students appreciate the film as a work of art.

Course Outline

The film study course encompasses the first twelve weeks of the tenth grade English curriculum. During the twelve weeks, nine films are chosen for study. The films for this year, being the first year the course has been offered were selected from a list suggested by several university professors. These films are listed on the preceding page. It should be mentioned that this list is not considered to be permanent, but is merely a list of the films used in the course this year, 1968-69. Recommendations for changes have come from faculty and students and will be considered in planning subsequent courses.

Since the language arts program at Woodridge High School provides for all tenth grade students to be scheduled for English the same period every day, and since the physical plant of the school provides a team teaching room large enough to hold the entire tenth grade at one time, the arrangements and facilities for such a course are excellent. In an attempt to give a good understanding of how the film study course is set up and to give some ideas as to what activities can be done with the films, the following overview of the course as presented this year is provided.

Film Study - Grade 10

During the opening week of school there were only three school days. During this time a series of films called "Film Appreciation Series" were shown which very creatively introduced the student to the study of films. This series was expressly designed as an introduction to the study of films and touched upon many aspects of film making, both technical and philosophical. These films provided a good basis for discussion of film making for all the films shown throughout the course.

The remainder of this outline will proceed to give some examples of lessons used by various teachers. Each of the sample lessons discussed in detail and those only briefly mentioned are merely representative of the kinds of activities that can be done with films. Not every teacher used all of these ideas presented as each teacher was free to do whatever he felt valuable for his particular class.

Sample Lesson One

Film: "Lord of the Flies"

Aim: Writing a critical review of a film.

Objectives:

1. To help the student become a more critical viewer of films.
2. To help the student understand why and how films are reviewed.
3. To help students organize opinions and observations for written presentation.

Procedures:

The first three days of class were spent viewing the film in the team teaching room. On the fourth day students went to their individual sections.

In this particular class the fourth day was spent in pre-writing activities. For the first part of the period the class was very anxious to discuss the film they had finished viewing and considerable time was allowed for students to project their thoughts about the movie--what they liked about it and what they didn't like about it. An attempt was then made to have students back up their statements by giving reasons for their opinions about the film. Often the students referred to the technical aspects of film making as presented in the "Film Appreciation Series" and related some of their reasons for liking or disliking particular scenes to the effective use of filming techniques as presented in this introductory series.

After such discussion, three copies of film reviews by a film critic appearing in a local paper were distributed. The class read through the first film review and then commented on the writer's viewpoints of the film as presented in the article. Such questions as the following were discussed. Why does he like or not like the film being reviewed? How does he present his opinions to the reader? What conclusions does he draw as to the worthwhileness of the film?

Since a thorough discussion of the film reviews was prevented by a lack of time, the class was assigned to read through each of the reviews and jot down comments relating to the questions already posed about the first one.

The second day of individual class sections began with a discussion of the comments the students had pertaining to the film reviews. Each article was analyzed with respect to the questions presented the day before. Student observations of the reviews pointed out several ideas about what goes into a critical review of a film. It was observed that the reviewer not only deals with his opinion of the story value of the film, but often deals with his viewpoints regarding creativeness of the actors and the effective use of filming techniques such as scenery, lighting, sound, or any other aspect of the film he considers to add or detract from the film. Also, depending on the reviewer's overall opinion of the film shown in his conclusions about the film as a whole, it was observed that the reviewer picks out details of the film that tend to prove his point of view.

After class discussion of the reviews read, the assignment was made to prepare a critical review of the film "Lord of the Flies." Students were encouraged to use some of the techniques already discussed in class and pointed out through the critical reviews studied. It was added that their review of the film "Lord of the Flies" should persuade the reader to want to see the film or should discourage him from seeing it.

Most of the critical reviews by the students were very well done for a first attempt. The objectives relating to this particular lesson were felt to have been accomplished.

Sample Lesson Two

Film: "David and Lisa"

Lesson: Constructing visual motifs using a Polaroid camera.

Objectives:

1. To add to the student's understanding of the technical aspects of film making.
2. To give the students responsibility through sharing and working together in small groups.
3. To give the students an appreciation of the technique of film making through first-hand experience.

Procedures:

The first day of class following the showing of "David and Lisa" was spent in discussion of the film with respect to student opinions. Through this discussion several comments were made relating to the effective use of camera angles and particular shots in the film. The class seemed to agree that this particular film was unusual in its use of the camera to create certain feelings and to express the attitudes of the characters. One example given was the use of the camera focusing on the hands of David and Lisa at the end of the movie to express David's irrational fear of being touched by anyone finally being driven away by his growing awareness of Lisa as a girl who depends on him for help and comfort. This idea was presented by merely showing a close-up of their hands as they slowly reached for each other and finally clasped hands tightly as they walked away. Pursuing the use of the camera to create particular emotional effects, the class had arrived at a point in their discussion for introducing the term "visual motifs," or the use of a single shot, such as of the main character's hands, to create an emotion or project a certain feeling within the audience. It was then proposed that the class could work in groups of three or four and construct a visual motif using a single picture. A Polaroid camera would be provided for taking the pictures.

The second day of class began by dividing the students into small groups for the class assignment. It was explained the class period would be used to prepare a scene to be shot the following day. The scene was to be based on the film "David and Lisa" and was to convey a particular emotion, such as love, fear, excitement, etc., to the viewer. At least two people were to be used in the scene. Spotlights were available for adding dramatic lighting and backdrops were provided through the use of large, folding display boards which could be decorated to suit the needs of the scene. As soon as the group had formulated an idea for their "visual motif," they were asked to use the equipment provided in the room to practice setting up their scene. Thus, the entire period was used for formulating ideas and trying them out.

The third day of class was used to actually shoot the scenes that each group had prepared to represent their idea of an example of a visual motif from "David and Lisa." Most of the class period was spent in shooting the scenes as the various equipment had to be used by each of the groups. After each group had taken a picture of their scene, they were told to analyze their snapshot to see if it conveyed their intended idea as clearly as possible. Most of the groups arrived at suggestions for improving their scene. It was decided that the next day would be used to re-take any of the scenes that were felt to be in need of improvement.

The fourth and final day of class before the next movie was scheduled to be shown, the various groups who indicated they wanted to re-shoot their scene were given the opportunity to do so. This involved nearly half of the class time. During the remainder of the period, each group was asked to write a

short, but concise paragraph as a caption to their picture, pointing out what effect they were striving for and why they thought their particular motif was considered important to the movie "David and Lisa." The pictures and captions, which were neatly typed on three by five cards, were later arranged in a bulletin board display.

The success of this particular assignment involving group work was felt to be very rewarding for the students, and was shown in their enthusiastic approach to the project. The objectives of this lesson were felt to have been accomplished satisfactorily.

It should be stressed here that the preceding sample lessons are merely two examples of the many activities used in the various sections. Some of the other activities were: group discussions and evaluations of a film; construction of a collage to represent the student's feeling about a film; dramatic re-enactment or interpretation of a scene from a film; writing of character sketches; and the preparation of individual projects of an original nature relating to a film.

Also, one of the highlights of the film study course was the actual writing of a movie script and filming of the movie that was entirely the original creation of the class. These student made films, using 8 mm. movie equipment, were presented to the entire tenth grade student body for judging. The "Tenth Grade Film Festival" then gave an award for the film voted as the most outstanding.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it should be noted that the film study course, having been found extremely valuable in providing for the needs and interests of the students, is to become a permanent part of the tenth grade English curriculum. Because of the great effects that films and television have upon our young people today, it is felt that this course is, perhaps, most valuable in preparing the students to become more critical viewers of films in order that they may have some intelligent basis for judging films they will be seeing throughout their lives.

The following example of a class discussion relating to the film study course is offered as a final comment on the course herein presented.

Subject: Student Discussion Dialogue

Focus: Discussion of movies as teaching technique

Grade Level: Tenth Grade (7 groups of students, 3 to a group)

Conclusions: All groups thought movies were extremely valuable as a teaching tool. They realized that they did not gain equally from each film shown but thought that they were much more aware, more observant and more capable of raising questions after watching the films. (Much of class discussion time during the film series focused on helping students to phrase significant questions.)

All groups wanted more time for related discussion between the films. The following suggestions were made:

- a week between films for classroom discussion
- show one reel, meet for discussion, show second reel, etc.
- read the book and see the filmed book (both pre-reading and post-reading were suggested)

All groups liked the films chosen for the following reasons:

- they were timely (sample comment--"A Patch of Blue" concerned the race issue)
- they made them think more deeply about things they themselves were concerned about (sample comment--"David and Lisa" faced personal problems which they either felt themselves or knew about; "A Dropout" raised questions which they considered valid about education, etc.)

All groups felt the time (number of weeks) involved in studying films should be extended.

(Teachers note: No negative comments were expressed during small and large group evaluation. A great many thoughtful observations were made in an easy "give-and-take" dialogue between both highly verbal and more verbally limited students.)